10: d'Orleans--305 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 147, 157, 463, 563, 609 Ethnic subgroups

"The Kas of Luang Prabang appear to be very shy, and I could not induce them, even by the promise of presents, to let me photograph them, the only means by which I succeeded being an order from the Siamese Colonel, while, when brought up, they were so intimidated that I could count their pulses beating at more than eighty to the minute. When walking in the streets they proceed as if they were afraid that some one was going to hurt them, and, being more laborious if less educated than the Laotians, they are employed by the latter to fashion the metals, to look after the stock and to cultivate the soil, so that they fill much the same part that the Lacædemonians of old did, except that they are not so badly used."

643* 157 175* Khamone-Noi seems to have been a most unusual man, and it is to be regretted that we cannot paint a more precise picture of him. Brought up at first as an exile in Vientiane, far from his native land, then the companion of Souligna's grandsons in their peregrinations, and finally king of Luang-Prabang which he had to leave in order to combat the Burmese and mount the throne of Xieng-Mai, this wandering prince experienced a thousand adventures which he faced with equanimity, manifesting on all occasions, both good and bad, a surprisingly philosophical humor and a most un- /224/ usual carefreeness. He had one passion, hunting, to which he devoted all his time and which gained him the surname "Ong-Nok," the /185/ prince of the birds (unless it meant the prince who was "always out").

669 643* 175* Intha-Som's bold stroke (1727). One day in 1727 when he was away from Luang-Prabang and, as the Annals say, in the company of Phya-Keo, Thai-Sang, Chabane, Thao-Bang-Khom and Thao-Bang-Houak, Intha-Som suddenly closed the gates of the city and occupied the palace. The maneuver was not accomplished without some disturbance, and on the way back Khamone-Noi had wind of some kind of treachery. He sent Thao-bang-Houak up to the approaches of the capital to find out what was going on. When he learned of the defection of all those in whom he had placed his confidence he halted, bewildered, and broke a gold carafe which he was holding in his hands. Then, as if ashamed of a gesture of anger which he had not been able to repress, he turned on his heel, leaving his companions free to follow him or not as they wished, and set out calmly in the direction of Xieng-Mai where new destinies awaited him.

This is how tradition relates the last part of this odd man's life:

643* 175* Odyssey of Khamone-Noi. "The inhabitants of Luang-Prabang had grown tired of seeing /186/ their king always absent from the palace and neglecting the management of their affairs. One day as he was returning from a long outing he was surprised to find the gates of his palace solidly closed. The people whom he met avoided him or fled when he approached. Some children who had gathered round and who were looking at him curiously said to him: 'You are never there, the leaders and the people are not satisfied, they have closed the gates of your palace so that you can leave it.' Then Khamone-Noi went away sadly, entered the pagoda of

What would he have said -- and what would not have been his delight -- if he had reached the smiling capital not in July when the tropical sun does indeed alternate its hottest rays with cataracts of the most violent downpours, but in December or January during the delicious Laotian winter which spreads the sweet coolness of Mediterranean springtime over an autumnal decor? He could scarcely have been able, in the course of his hunts for insects, to grasp /223/ a fugitive vision, between two tornadoes, of the golden minaret of the Phou-Si, the sacred hill in the heart of the city, or of the harmonious suburbs all trembling in their mantles of verdure, or of the flaming twilights on the misty mountains at whose feet winds the capricious Nam-Khane, a true river of diamonds by moonlight... 132 /361/

"The city," he explains, "is built on both banks of the river, but the greater number of dwellings are built on the left bank. The largest part surrounds an isolated peak which is a hundred and some meters high and at the summit of which a pagoda has been established." 361

On August 5 he was presented "to the princes who govern this little State and who bear the title of kings." He depicts them (Tiantha-Koumane and his brother the Oupahat Oun-Kham) with a dash of bantering irreverence, then immediately acknowledges that the king is "kind and good" to him (1). 643*

1. "He takes care of my letters. He himself will take them to Bangkok where he goes, I believe, to take his oath of allegiance and vassaldom." "I do not know why," he continues, "but they display in my behalf all that they are capable of imagining in the way of pomp and splendor." 643* /648*/

He is thus the first to note the dominant character trait of this kind, open-hearted /224/ and hospitable people. Tiantha-Koumane was certainly ignorant of his guest's capacities and had no opinion on the naturalist Mouhot, who was still quite unknown in Europe. It was therefore not the scholar whom he intended to honor, but simply the stranger and the traveler whose visit was a happy event for the kingdom, an event which should be celebrated with great pomp and with general rejoicing. All the Frenchmen from Pavie down to our own day who have explored the principality have been given a welcome which has been just as spontaneous and have been received with the same eager and smiling good grace. 609 157 643*